Mills Administration Announces Steps to Prepare for Offshore Wind Investments at Maine's Ports

Augusta, MAINE – The Mills Administration today announced next steps in the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative's effort to prepare Maine's commercial seaports to advance the University of Maine's patented floating offshore wind technology and attract offshore wind industry investment in Maine.

Governor Janet Mills issued the following statement:

"The Gulf of Maine has some of the strongest winds in the world, and Maine has among the most accessible deep-water ports on the East Coast. When combined with our manufacturing base, pioneering research and technology into floating offshore wind, and an unparalleled workforce with expertise in marine fields, offshore wind presents an unprecedented economic and investment opportunity for Maine."

"I have today directed my administration to assess the infrastructure at Maine's commercial seaports and any added investment needed to support opportunities in offshore wind. Led by the Governor's Energy Office, the Department of Transportation and other agencies as necessary, we will evaluate multiple port development options and study possible offshore wind uses at the Port of Searsport, the Port of Portland, the Port of Eastport, and others, to examine how to use Maine's extensive marine capacities to support the emerging offshore wind industry."

"Offshore wind is a great opportunity to fight climate change. It also opens up a new world of jobs for Maine people, an economic incentive for young people to stay in their home state or to move here and make it their home. It is an opportunity to show the world how much Maine has to offer to the technologies of the future. It is now time, particularly in light of federal funding opportunities, to consider improvements to Maine's ports."

The Mills Administration actions come as demand for offshore wind energy and related port facilities has increased since the Biden Administration announced in March a new federal target of 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030. Last month, the Department of Interior announced plans to advance commercial-scale offshore wind, including in the Gulf of Maine, in coming years.

The existing infrastructure, transportation links, deep-water access, and room to grow at Maine's commercial seaports are a competitive advantage for Maine to develop good-paying jobs in clean energy fields, maritime careers, manufacturing and fabrication trades, engineering, shipping and more in the offshore wind industry.

"The emergence of the offshore wind industry will provide new opportunities for students and graduates across our curriculum, in fields as diverse as logistics, operations, supply chain management, engineering, and environmental affairs - all of which are core career tracks at Maine Maritime Academy," **said Dr. William J. Brennan, President of Maine Maritime Academy**. "The Academy is uniquely positioned to support workforce development in this exciting new field with our training center on our Bucksport campus. Considering the extensive fleet of vessels we have, the type of hands-on instruction we provide, and the training facilities we operate, the development of the offshore wind industry will benefit both Maine Maritime Academy and the State of Maine."

"Growing up in Bath, I saw firsthand the impact that port investment can have on our statewide economy and the people working at ports," **said Bruce Van Note, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation**. "Now, with an emerging offshore wind industry, Maine has an opportunity to create jobs, strengthen our economy, and harness clean energy. With a collaborative effort, we can make sure that Maine is well-positioned to realize the jobs and the economic benefits of offshore wind while protecting our longstanding, iconic industries."

"Maine is uniquely positioned to be a global leader in floating offshore wind research, technology, and innovation to meet the growing need for renewable offshore wind energy to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels," **said Dan Burgess, Director of the Governor's Energy Office**. "Maine's ports will play an integral role in this and advancing this will provide valuable input to planning Maine's overall investment and infrastructure needs for offshore wind."

"The creation of a comprehensive port strategy could make Maine a premier hub for offshore wind development and serve markets along the northern Atlantic Coast**," said Dana Connors, President of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce**. "Embracing this new industry,

while preserving our essential fishing industry, will help drive economic growth and prosperity in Maine for decades."

Investment in Maine's seaports will also help advance patented floating offshore wind technology developed at the University of Maine. The first planned use of UMaine's floating platform, a one-turbine demonstration project slated for deployment in 2024 by New England Aqua Ventus, is expected to use the ports of Eastport and Searsport for assembly and transportation.

"The University of Maine continues to value its participation in the state's plan for renewable energy and economic development," **said Joan Ferrini-Mundy, president of the University of Maine and the University of Maine at Machias, and vice chancellor for research and innovation for the University of Maine System**. "Maine's offshore wind strategy, building on UMaine floating platform technology, shows the impact of R&D investment and the outstanding work of the many UMaine faculty, staff and students who have been involved."

"Investments in port infrastructure are a key component in building an offshore wind industry here in Maine, which can ultimately lead to protecting the Gulf of Maine from the impacts of climate change," **said Chris Wissemann of New England Aqua Ventus**. "We applaud the State of Maine for having the foresight to take this crucial first step that puts Maine on a path to become a leader in this rapidly growing industry and create good paying jobs."

"The University of Maine patented floating platform was designed specifically for the deeper waters off the coast of Maine using concrete materials and fabrication techniques that capitalize on Maine construction companies and Maine workers strengths," **said Habib Dagher, Director of the Advanced Structures and Composites Center at the University of Maine**. "Building on-shore next to port facilities, then towing complete units offshore is the key to economic opportunity and minimizing construction times at sea."

In March 2020, Governor Mills directed MaineDOT to study the Port of Searsport to assess needs to support Maine's offshore wind industry. An active seaport since the 1700s, the Port of Searsport is among the most versatile port sites on the East Coast.

The study (PDF), which evaluated physical and technical characteristics of various locations in the Port of Searsport, identified multiple sites for consideration as part of a hub for offshore wind, including Mack Point terminal and an area of state-owned Sears Island that is reserved for development. That site, according to the study, is recommended for further environmental analyses, geotechnical assessment, and preliminary design work to gauge environmental impacts and evaluations of alternatives, as would be required by federal and state permitting.

Based on the study recommendations, the Administration has informed the Town of Searsport about its intent to conduct further environmental and geotechnical surveys in the area. Governor Mills has also directed her administration to conduct a robust public process and engage with key stakeholders and community organizations about the Port of Searsport.

"We look forward to working closely with MaineDOT as they work to further assess improvements to the Port of Searsport," **said Searsport Town Manager James Gillway**. "We know this will be a thoughtful and open process to explore the role our port will play in the support of the offshore wind industry. We look forward to realizing the economic benefits of putting more port into Searsport, while we preserve the ecological and recreational aspects of what makes us special. It is exciting to think that Searsport might play a role in the future of renewable energy thus reducing our country's carbon footprint and contributing to actually saving the planet."

"Investment in clean renewable energy is critical in the fight to protect Maine's wildlife and habitat from climate change, and we believe in the potential for floating offshore wind to produce the clean, local energy Maine needs to meet our climate goals," **said Eliza Donoghue, Advocacy Director at Maine Audubon**. "We look forward to working with MaineDOT and local partners to maintain Sears Island's outstanding environmental and recreational values, while pursuing the area's unique potential to support the offshore wind industry."

"Unprecedented warming and acidification of the Gulf of Maine due to climate change gravely threatens the future of Maine's beloved coastal communities and heritage fishing industries," **said William Sedlack, Program Manager at Maine Conservation Voters**. "Offshore wind

technology is an opportunity for us to stimulate our economy with new good-paying jobs and meet our state's bold climate goals — and coastal communities must be part of the planning process. The Port of Searsport study is another instance of the Mills Administration's thoughtful commitment to minimizing impacts to the marine environment and coastal industries, while maximizing the potential benefits of this abundant natural resource."

A MaineDOT study of other Maine ports, a companion to the Port of Searsport study, is also underway. That study is evaluating how to strategically align Maine's ports for offshore wind investment and infrastructure, while minimizing impacts on fishing, marine industries, and working waterfronts.

These port studies will be included in development of Maine's Offshore Wind Roadmap, a strategic planning process coordinated by the Governor's Energy Office. The Roadmap and port assessments are elements of the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative, a multi-faceted approach to offshore wind in Maine created by Governor Mills in 2019 to pursue a thoughtful, responsible path for offshore wind to benefit Maine's people, environment, and economy.

As part of the Initiative, the Governor's Energy Office in October submitted an application to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to lease a 15.2-square-mile area nearly 30 miles offshore in the Gulf of Maine for the nation's first floating offshore wind research site in federal waters.

To further reflect the Administration's priority of locating offshore wind in Federal waters and acknowledge concerns raised by Maine fisherman, Governor Mills earlier this year signed legislation to prohibit new offshore wind projects in State waters, which extend three miles from shore.

Other elements of the Initiative regional collaboration through the Gulf of Maine Task Force, and offshore wind research and development partnerships with entities such as the United Kingdom, the National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium, the Business Network for Offshore Wind, and the Regional Wildlife Science Entity.

For more information on the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative, please visit maineffshorewind.org.